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Quarterly Newsletter

THE CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP  
AND LEARNING IN RISK

## New Years Newsletter 2020



### A Not So Happy New Year

This newsletter was going to be one to wish all a Happy New Year but alas not so happy here in Australia where over 12 million acres of our country has already burned and we have 2 months of summer remaining. If you wish to do something please donate to the **Red Cross Appeal**, thanks.

If you are interested in the issue of safety during a crisis I wrote this piece about the tension between ALARP and the Precautionary Principle last week (<https://safetyrisk.net/when-safety-is-beyond-your-control/>). There is also extensive discussion about how a crisis affects communities in the final chapters of my book *For The Love of Zero* pp. 120ff (free download <https://www.humandimensions.com/product/for-the-love-of-zero-free-download/>).

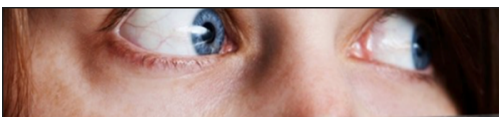
For all those who have made contact during this crisis in our country, thanks for your support.

### Newsletter Theme

As you may realize each newsletter follows a theme in research and discussion. You can view past newsletters where their theme is clearly labeled, here: <https://spor.com.au/downloads/newsletter-archive/>

The theme for this newsletter is on the nature of fear, anxiety and hope through imagination.

### The Fearful Mind



When one thinks about risk and all that uncertainty entails it makes sense that risk is accompanied by the emotions of: fear, anxiety, distress, doubt, nervousness and

unease. At the moment in the Australian bushfires many communities sit numb and existing in this state at present (<https://www.psychology.org.au/for-the-public/Psychology-topics/Disasters/Bushfires>).

None of these emotions are necessarily bad unless they reach disabling levels. When one considers the 'socialite' of overpowering emotions (encompassing culture, myths, semiotics and narrative) one needs to understand that these are beyond rational control. One can't just 'think' or 'reprogram' cognition to stop being anxious or depressed.

In small doses most of the emotions that accompany risk and uncertainty can be healthy and life saving. In large doses such emotions can lead to: paralysis, destructive negativity, delusional self-talk, panic, fixation, obsession, projection, dread and terror. Excessive fear tends to make humans dysfunctional.

A healthy sense of fear and the emotions that accompany risk can lead to: self-preservation, safety,

community care, self-regulation, trust, faith and hope.

It is important to pay attention to the notion of 'Mind' in this discussion. The idea that fear is only brain-situated and can be overcome by some computerized sense of programming is a delusion of behaviourism. When one has a holistic understanding of Mind as persons fully embodied, then we can start to tackle the elusive complexities of the human emotions and foster social structures to deal holistically with the many challenges of risk and associated emotions of fear.

A recent article by Bonnici (Workers Are Afraid to Take a Mental Health Day', *Scientific American Mind*, Nov. 2019) demonstrates the complexities of fear in the workplace. It seems strange that regardless of all the campaigns about mental health and all this 'R U OK' awareness publicity that, people remain afraid to declare their struggles, ideations, fears, anxieties and doubts at work for fear of being judged, blamed and victimized (<http://theconversation.com/raising-awareness-of-mental-health-issues-is-not-enough-89794>).

Part of the problem with fear in the workplace is that we are commanded and seduced by behaviourist and cognitivist thinking that seeks to situate problems in the brain. Such thinking projects problems and solutions on to individuals and lets the community off 'scott-free' as having no social responsibility in the situation. Our language and discourse in mental health (and suicide) still remains individualist and focused on the brain-as-computer attached to materialist assumptions of neuroscience.

At the core of the problem lies the assumption that fear and anxiety are conscious, subjective states. We don't have to look very far to find that such assumptions are erroneous. We know from extensive studies that things like breathing, yoga exercises, music, play, enactment and meditation can affect stress, fear and anxiety states ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274965480\\_Self-Regulation\\_of\\_Breathing\\_as\\_a\\_Primary\\_Treatment\\_for\\_Anxiety](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274965480_Self-Regulation_of_Breathing_as_a_Primary_Treatment_for_Anxiety); [http://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1591&context=msw\\_papers](http://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1591&context=msw_papers); <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/anxiety-treatment-options>).

As strange as it may seem, and despite all talk of 'counselling', money and 'rebuilding', the best healing in a crisis is simply the presence of others: listening, holding, sharing, hugs, crying, grieving and supporting each other. Embodied presence must accompany text, language and talk or it seems nothing but shallow.

It is important too when thinking about Mindfulness that we don't confuse such concepts as 'brainfulness'. All the extensive research work by those in the disciplines of Affectivity, Intercorporeality and Interaffectivity (Fuchs, Panksepp, Ginot, Damasio, Varela, Thompson, Colombetti, Barrett, Ravven, Tversky, Robinson and Claxton) demonstrate that the brain-as-computer conceptual metaphor is delusional. Human contact, social resonance, empathy and feeling WITH others is essential for healing of any trauma. Further read: Van Der Kolk, B., (2015) *The Body Keeps the Score, The Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Books. London. (<https://www.booktopia.com.au/the-body-keeps-the-score-bessel-van-der-kolk/book/9780143127741.html>)

Strategies of supposed healing that are not Holistic tend to make the situation worse when it comes to the challenges of fear, anxiety, learning and mental health (<https://safetyrisk.net/holistic-ergonomics/>).

So, if one wants to help, support and address the challenges of risk and associated emotions of fear and anxiety in the workplace, then one needs to embrace the notion of sociality. We should be asking the following questions:

- What are the circumstances and social arrangements that drive fear and anxiety in the workplace?
- Does our workplace have the courage to discuss and normalize the nature of feelings and emotions?
- In what ways does our organization demonise emotions?
- Do we have mechanisms in place to recognize and tackle fear/anxiety that drive such destructive dehumanizing dynamics?
- Has our organization defined personhood, an ethic of risk and arrangements that 'humanize' the workplace?
- How is 'well being' defined? Is it individual, social or both?
- How is mindfulness defined? Is it individual, social or both?
- How does the language and discourse in the workplace assume that risk, fear and anxiety are 'chosen'?
- How does your workplace understand culture? Holistically? Or just as 'what we do around

here'?

If after asking these questions of your workplace you would like to have a conversation about the interpretation of your results please email [rob@humandimensions.com](mailto:rob@humandimensions.com)

## The Fear of Imagination

The risk, safety and security worldview is dominated by Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and this has led to its evolution in a particular approach to reason. The STEM-only view of reason is contained within a particular tradition, philosophy and discipline of reason, what Johnson (*The Body in the Mind*) calls 'the Objectivist view'.

At the moment I have two grandchildren that enable the study of pre-language, pre-text learning. It is amazing to watch children learn through bodily mimetics (imitating and copying). Most of what children learn in the early years is 'felt' and copied from the ones they love. Similarly, what they don't know is also limited by the interests of those they love. Both my youngest grandchildren are at present in the process of learning through touch, sight, perception, playing, copying, repeating, imagining and pretending. Even in the stage of pretending they are yet to develop the abstract idea of connecting symbols with meaning. This comes much later even though they can recognize symbols they cannot transact in symbols (Piaget). Their reality is very much nurtured through play.

In many ways imagination is dangerous. It is the ability to think, feel, 'mind enact' or emote something that is not, whether it is possible or impossible. The other day I was with my granddaughter in a car park and we used our arms to simulate flying to the car. It was actually a game to get her to the car because she didn't want to go home (imagination is a great motivator). She knew of course that we were not flying, neither that we were birds but we looked and felt like birds, we squawked like birds and then later talked in the car about flying away from dragons. At the moment she loves identifying and playing with every character in the 'my little pony' franchise ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My\\_Little\\_Pony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Little_Pony)). So my interests these days are often focused on unicorns, magic, flying and a host of supernatural semiotics that not only dominate the life of children but adorn our currencies, government buildings, war memorials and public monuments.

So whilst we were 'flying' a car entered the car park so we quickly dropped into reality and became vulnerable granddad and girl and got out of the way. We went from imagination to intuitive risk assessment in a millisecond.

Unfortunately, the STEM-only mindset that dominates risk and safety frames the emotions as a problem. This is reflected in mantras like 'safety is a choice you make' and in the demonizing of human subjectivity in risk assessment. We also see in the language of 'lapses and violations' (eg. James Reason etc) a focus on human error as a failure of reasoning. No wonder we end up with a risk and safety industry consumed with error as 'wrong thinking' and therefore fixated with compliance and procedures. This results in negative framing of adaptability, creativity, imagination and innovation. All these dispositions require risk for there is no learning without risk.

Rather than demonise imagination people in risk and safety ought to embrace it and study the importance of imagination. Imagination is critical to all learning, prediction, embodied resonance, emotional attachment, empathy and play. Here are some links to research:

- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328036557\\_DREAMS\\_EMBODIED\\_IMAGINATION\\_AND\\_THE\\_CREATIVE\\_MIND\\_A\\_PILOT\\_STUDY](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328036557_DREAMS_EMBODIED_IMAGINATION_AND_THE_CREATIVE_MIND_A_PILOT_STUDY)
- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24099211\\_Speaking\\_of\\_Art\\_as\\_Embodied\\_Imagination\\_A\\_Multisensory\\_Approach\\_to\\_Understanding\\_Aesthetic\\_Experience](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24099211_Speaking_of_Art_as_Embodied_Imagination_A_Multisensory_Approach_to_Understanding_Aesthetic_Experience)
- <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10036/3205/DawneyL.pdf?sequence=1>
- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00107530.2016.1198885?journalCode=uucp20>

It is interesting that the New View of Safety talks about 'work as imagined compared to work as done' yet the phenomena of imagination itself, its nature and embodiment is accepted as a given as a 'mental model'. Imagination in and of itself is still not a valued human dynamic in this tradition. Further:

- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288623529\\_Why\\_is\\_work-as-imagined\\_different\\_from\\_work-as-done](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288623529_Why_is_work-as-imagined_different_from_work-as-done)
- <https://safetydifferently.com/the-varieties-of-human-work/>

If we are to better understand human judgment and decision making in risk perhaps we need to spend some time in understanding the nature of imagination as embodied, felt and enacted. Maybe then, this interest may lead to ways of knowing and enacting that are not dependent on systems and bureaucracy to tackle risk.





## The Fear Factor and Embodied Fear



The Fear Factor TV series attracts people by projecting risk and empathizing with fear, phobias and injury. We learn and empathise with the fear of others through bodily resonance and mirror neurons. Fear is not something that happens in the brain but it is embodied. Often we rationalize about our fears long after the fact that we felt afraid, anxious and stressed. We know our stress and anxiety not because we have a headache but because we feel physically sick, our heart races and breathing increases, well before we get time to process fear cognitively. Here are some links to help research further about the embodied nature of fear.

- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/what-happens-brain-feel-fear-180966992/>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/brain/the-science-of-fear.aspx>
- <https://www.sciencefocus.com/the-human-body/the-science-of-fear-what-makes-us-afraid/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2016/05/10/the-science-of-fear-why-do-i-like-being-scared/>
- <https://www.livescience.com/56691-the-science-of-fear.html>

In many respects imagination is not about 'thinking' but rather 'feeling'. We tend to think of imagination as brain activity not Mind activity and this frame holds us back from understanding how imagination works.

If you want to learn more about human embodiment and the nature of risk then why not enroll in the online module in Holistic Ergonomics: <https://cllr.com.au/product/holistic-ergonomics-unit-6/>

## Masters Studies at Federation University

Those who wish to study at Masters or PhD level in the Social Psychology of Risk at Federation University can register here: [e.seaward@federation.edu.au](mailto:e.seaward@federation.edu.au)



Apart from Federation University, no other University in Australia or Globally, has permission to use Dr Long's curriculum, tools or materials. Indeed, unless one is qualified in SPoR it is not likely that anything branded as such is authentically about the Social Psychology of Risk (SPoR).

**Enrolments** can be made now for studies in 2020 face to face and online.

Any studies already undertaken with the Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk can be accredited with Federation University.

## Introduction CLLR Studies - Face to Face for 2020



The four introductory Modules to SPoR (Introduction to the Social Psychology of Risk, SEEK, Semiotics and Risk Amplification) are being offered in later



## THE CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING IN RISK

February 24-27 and mid April 20-23 in  
Canberra.

You can enroll for these modules here:

Modules 1 & 2 February 24-27 2020

<https://cllr.com.au/product/an-introduction-to-the-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-1/>

<https://cllr.com.au/product/seek-the-social-psychology-of-event-investigations-unit-2/>

Modules 3 and 8 April 20-23

<https://cllr.com.au/product/semoiotics-and-the-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-3/>

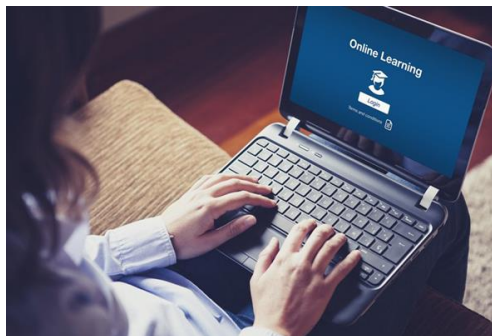
<https://cllr.com.au/product/social-amplification-risk-unit-8/>

### Online Learning for 2020

If you are interested in studies with CLLR and don't live in Australia you can study online here:

<https://cllr.com.au/online-courses-overseas-students/>

The online learning coordinator is Hayden Collins and he supervises the program. The program includes watching a lecture series on the module of choice, interacting with Hayden via Skype and emails and practical exercises in embedding knowledge and skills. You can contact Hayden directly here: [hayden@cllr.com.au](mailto:hayden@cllr.com.au)



### Advanced One Week International Intensive 3-7 February 2020



Join International participants and others from Australia for advanced workshops in Transdisciplinarity and Ethics on 3-7 February 2020.

The picture above is from the last International Workshop in August 2019 of Frank (Canada), Barbro (Sweden) and Brian (Stn Africa/Austria) on the semiotic walk at the unique Cork Plantation in Canberra at the National Arboretum.

You can read an overview and register here:

<https://spor.com.au/home/one-week-intensive-2-modules-february-and-august-2020/>

Please ignore the typo that mentions August, the dates are:

[Transdisciplinarity and Risk 3,4 February 2020](#)

[An Ethic of Risk 5,6 February 2020](#)

[Semiotic walk 7 February 2020](#)

If you have any questions please contact rob at [rob@cllr.com.au](mailto:rob@cllr.com.au)

### Free Books and Downloads



There are now three books available for download in the series on risk, these are:

*For the Love of Zero, Human Fallibility and Risk*

<https://www.humandimensions.com/product/for-the-love-of-zero-free-download/>

*Real Risk, Human Discerning and Risk*

<https://www.humandimensions.com/product/real-risk/>

*Fallibility and Risk, Living with Uncertainty* <https://www.humandimensions.com/product/fallibility-risk-living-uncertainty/>

There are also other downloads from Risky Conversations book: Talking Book

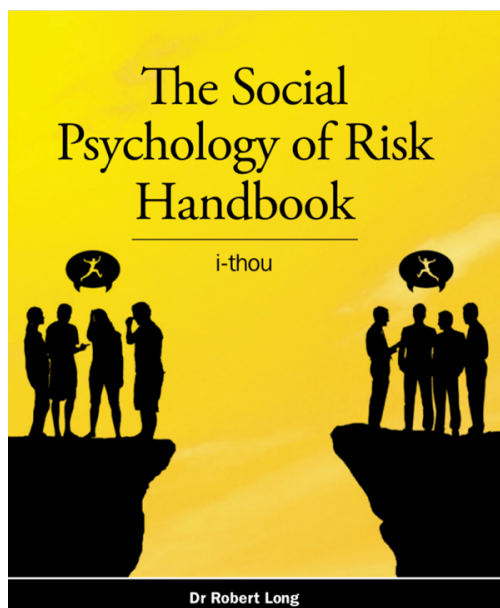
<https://spor.com.au/podcasts/risky-conversations-talking-book/>

Video Series

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/3938199>



## Competition for SPoR Handbook



For those who have not yet purchased the latest book from Dr Long, here is your chance for a free copy of *The Social Psychology of Risk Handbook, i-thou*. (Ten copies available)

Here is the challenge:

Undertake an inkblot (Rorschach) test (2 minutes) for fun

(<https://openpsychometrics.org/tests/HEMCR/>) and email a comment on your experience to [admin@cllr.com.au](mailto:admin@cllr.com.au).

There is no right or wrong in this competition it is put forward for your reflection on the connection between perception, imagination and personal history.

You can read more about how imagination and the Rorschach test work here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/feb/21/rorschach-test-inkblots-history>



**I am not interested in your test results but rather in your reflections on this challenge to your imagination.**

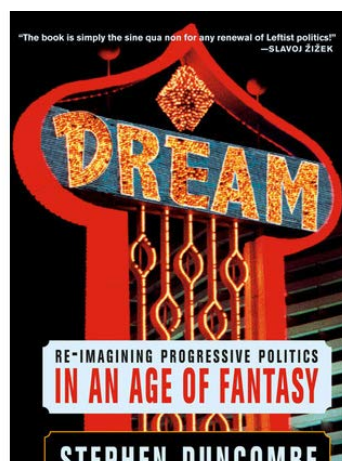
Please submit your snail mail address with your comment to be in the running for a book.

## Imagination as the Politics of Envisioning

What is human imagination? Where is it situated? Is it just a thought in the brain or is imagination embodied in the feeling of music, art, drama, play and dance? What about humans who have visions? What of hallucination? Dreams? And Mindfulness (yoga, meditation etc)?

Rob Hopkins discusses the nature of imagination in his excellent book: *From What is to What if, Unleashing the Power of Imagination to Create the Future We Want*. (2019) Chelsea Green Publishing. London.

Imagination is the ability to 'look' at things as



if they could be otherwise (Dewey). And so the process of 'envisioning' is being able to feel for newness, difference (Derrida) and 'play' for the unreal.



Whilst we need to be skeptical in reading Rudolph Steiner (research anthroposophy here: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1180016?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1>) there is some valuable discussion about imagination from this tradition ([https://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA169/English/AP1990/Towlma\\_index.html](https://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA169/English/AP1990/Towlma_index.html)).

One of the challenges for the risk industry is balancing the nature of compliance with the need for imagination. Conservatism is the enemy of imagination, stasis chokes imagination and fuels the idea that change is the enemy.

In Biblical times the idea of 'prophetic imagination' captured the mind of Israel whilst it was enslaved to the Imperialism of Rome and Egypt and gave them hope that one day they could be politically free from the slavery of alien cultures. Fromm (*The Revolution of Hope*) refers to this kind of imagination as essential to reject of any form of colonialism or imperialism. Imagination is also foundational to spiritual and rap songs for oppressed African Americans enslaved in the USA.

An excellent read on the essential nature of imagination, improvisation, dreaming and play to political change is by Stephen Duncombe (2007) *Dream Re-imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy* ([http://www.stephenduncombe.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Dream\\_final.pdf](http://www.stephenduncombe.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Dream_final.pdf))

If we want change in the way organisations tackle risk and to escape from the oppression of bureaucracy, systems and cultural compliancing, then we need more imagination, envisioning and dreaming in the industry not less. The best way to wreck imagination of course is to try and measure it (<https://ideas.ted.com/can-a-test-measure-your-imagination/>). Only STEM would think such was a good idea.

Imagination, play, envisioning and dreaming enable us to ask new and better questions about the dehumanizing dynamics that disable persons in organisations through the politics of risk and safety.

## Blogs and Sites of Interest

<http://teachertombsblog.blogspot.com/>

<https://www.quora.com/>

<https://christopherwatkin.com/>

<https://www.edge.org/>

<http://www.creativesemiotics.co.uk/blog.html>

## Contact

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